Written Reflection #5

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There is so much artistry that gets overlooked on a day-to-day basis. Some because we are just too busy or to use to seeing it, but others are because we often have a narrow view of what we consider "art." Young people especially tend to think of art as exclusively the stuff that hangs in museums. I think it's important as art educators that we help broaden that perspective. That's the main reason I enjoyed reading about the lesson on Philip Simmons. The study and exploration of his craft allowed children to see that "anything in the world can be turned into art, even gates" (Hunter-Doniger et al., 2022, p. 35). Though not to nit-pick a child's response, I think the more accurate response is that so many things are already art, we just have to stop and notice them.

This article is a good reminder of how focused we have been on teaching "fine art" in schools. Luckily, I do think things are changing and there is more interest and legitimacy around crafts and functional art. As mentioned in this article, a lot of this neglect stems from it often being the work of an undervalued group, whether that is the gates of Philip Simmons or the quilting of women. These things were seen as their jobs or roles, not artwork. Yet the talent and skill that goes into so much of theses crafts is often more impressive than many things I've seen on gallery walls. I too am glad to now know the work of Philip Simmons.

I also appreciate the culturally relevant pedagogy and the transdisciplinary approach that this lesson took. The fact that the focus of this project was on artwork they could walk around their city and see is something very special. It makes art feel much more tangible and achievable both as a practice and career. I also loved reading about the students initially resisting the application of math in art. Students often see these two subjects as polar opposites, but the more we can encourage them to combine these skills the more complex and unique their work can become. This not only helps students apply math skills but also "…create[s] an educational

environment that embraces visual arts as an essential subject equal to the other academic disciplines" (Hunter-Doniger et al., 2022, p. 35). When I first read the article, I was scoffing at the probability that many art classrooms would have access to a 3-D printer, even though I know the technology is becoming more accessible. Regardless, upon further reflection I realize this project could still be successful if you stop before the 3-D printing section or find another way to build the gates the children designed. Either way you're helping them engage multiple parts of their brain and build connections between different areas of study. Transdisciplinary projects help create well-rounded and critically thinking students and I'd love to find ways to implement them in my future classroom.

References

Hunter-Doniger, T., Radakovic, N., Ian O'Byrne, W., Adams B., Gourdie, E., Heckman, C., & Smith, D. (2022) *3D Printed Iron Gates: Celebrating an African American Artist Through a Transdisciplinary Lesson, Art Education*, 75:4,33-38, DOI: 10.1080/00043125.2022.2053463.